Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response (ARMER)
Standards, Protocols, Procedures

Document Section	**Interoperability Standards**	**Status**: Approved
State Standard Number	**3.46.0**	
Standard Title	**Ontario-Minnesota Interoperability**	
Date Established	**03/24/2016**	**SECB Approval**: 03/24/2016
Replaces Document Dated	**n/a**	
Date Revised	**n/a**	

1. Purpose or Objective

This Standard establishes procedures for interoperable communications with Ontario, Canada in border areas with Minnesota. Included within this Standard are guidelines on establishing, maintaining, deactivating, and testing radio patches between the Ontario Provincial Public Safety Radio Fleetnet radio system and Minnesota's ARMER network.

2. Technical Background

▪ **Capabilities**

The radio patch detailed in this standard, will allow voice interoperability between Ontario and Minnesota public safety radio system users.

▪ **Constraints**

Interoperability is established via a gateway/patch between disparate radio systems. Technical constraints include:

- Ontario radio users are dependent on their radios reaching Ontario radio towers and Minnesota radio users are dependent upon their radio reaching Minnesota radio towers. Just because the systems are patched together does not mean that an Ontario user may use their radio well into Minnesota or that a Minnesota user may use their radio well into Ontario.
- Features such as radio identification and emergency alarms will not pass to the other radio system but should remain functional on the user's home system as long as the user's radio is still affiliating with its home network.
- A short delay in making the connection is a common shortcoming of all patches so care must be taken to pause after pushing the Push-to-Talk (PTT) button and before speaking.

3. Operational Context

Interoperability between Ontario and Minnesota is predicated on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) titled *Memorandum of Understanding for Access to Common Communications through the Provincial Public Safety Radio Network for Improved Inter-Agency Radio Interoperability* dated June 18, 2015. This MOU establishes many of the responsibilities identified in this Standard. A copy of the agreement will be maintained by the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator.

The MOU specifically identifies the Parties of the agreement to be "police" and that "radio interoperability shall be for police communications at the operational level." For the purposes of interoperable public safety radio communications with Ontario, "police communications" includes

all public safety radio communications made by law enforcement personnel (sworn or civilian), fire personnel, EMS personnel, search and rescue personnel, forestry personnel, or any other person designated by law enforcement during an event and while in the course of their duties.

Interoperability between Ontario and Minnesota is accomplished through a radio connection. A consolette owned by the Province of Ontario and programmed with an Ontario trunked-VHF talkgroup (known as "PP-INT-2") was installed in the MnDOT-owned and maintained radio tower site located at the Boise Cascade Pulp Yard in International Falls, Minnesota. The consolette was connected to the ARMER infrastructure and its antenna was aimed at an Ontario Provincial Public Safety Radio Fleetnet tower in Devlin, Ontario. The connection may be enabled and disabled by the Minnesota State Patrol Dispatch.

The talkgroup resource PP-INT-2 is available to Ontario Provincial Police Provincial Communication Centre (PCC) located in Thunder Bay, Ontario and the Kenora Central Ambulance Communication Centre (CACC) located in Kenora, Ontario. The PCC (Thunder Bay) may add the Ministry of Natural Resources (forest service) to the interoperability patch. The CACC (Kenora) may add fire resources to the interoperability patch.

Summary:

Ontario Communications Center	Location	Services
Ontario Provincial Police Provincial Communication Centre (PCC)	Thunder Bay	Police (primary) Forest Service (patch)
Kenora Central Ambulance Communication Centre (CACC)	Kenora	EMS (primary) Fire (patch)

4. Recommended Protocol/ Standard
This Standard should be followed when considering, activating, utilizing, and deactivating an interoperability patch between Ontario and Minnesota radio systems.

5. Recommended Procedure
Any public safety representative in Minnesota (police, fire, EMS, search & rescue, forestry, etc.) may request that the Minnesota-Ontario patch be enabled by contacting the Minnesota State Patrol Dispatch. The Minnesota State Patrol Dispatch should notify the proper Ontario communications center by telephone. The Minnesota State Patrol Dispatch will maintain current contact information for calls to Ontario. Requests from Ontario to enable the patch should be made by calling the Minnesota State Patrol Dispatch.

Testing of the Ontario-Minnesota patch shall be performed weekly. The specific day and time of the test shall be at a time agreeable to the Kenora Central Ambulance Communications Centre (CACC), the Ontario Provincial Police Provincial Communications Centre (PCC) and Minnesota State Patrol. Ontario and Minnesota must each provide one communication center and one police vehicle for the test. For the purposes of testing, Minnesota defines a "police vehicle" as any mobile or portable ARMER radio. Ontario is required by MOU to log the test. The Minnesota State Patrol is encouraged to also maintain a testing log.

Technical problems should be promptly reported to the ARMER Radio Operations Center.

Dispatch-to-Dispatch Communications is discouraged but is allowable in extenuating circumstances.

Communications regarding the protection of human life and property shall take priority over communication related to serious criminal offenses.

Plain English shall be used. Codes shall not be used.

The communications center requesting the Ontario-Minnesota patch be established should maintain control of communications unless that duty is explicitly transferred to another. The Minnesota State Patrol Dispatch Center is responsible for deactivating the Ontario-Minnesota patch at the conclusion of the event. If the event was under the control of an Ontario authority and it is not clear if the event has concluded, the Minnesota State Patrol Dispatch Center is responsible for checking with the Ontario authority to disable the patch at the event's conclusion.

6. Management
The Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) is responsible for supervising and managing this Standard.